

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



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Double standard

Dear Editor,

Do I smell a "Double Standard" or what? On December 19, 1991 I, along with several friends, attended an Oswegoland Park District board meeting which was open to the public. I attended this specific meeting to listen and tape record the comments that the Park Board members and Park Director, Bert Gray, were to make on item number 9 on the agenda: Saw-Wee-Kee Park Update -IEPA, USEPA, and IPARKS Insurance Option. Guess what; fellow taxpayers of Oswegoland? I got the chance to listen to the comments, but I was informed by Mr. Bert Gray that I could not tape record the meeting!

On Thursday, July 2, 1992, while reading the Ledger Sentinel, to my surprise on page 9 there was an article about a State Official of the Illinois Attorney General's office that stated the law was very clear that "any person" may record public meetings. Continuing the quote, "no one has the right to demand that taping be stopped nor do they have the right to take someone's tape." If I am reading the "quote" correctly, my right as a taxpayer within the Oswegoland Park District was "violated" by Mr. Bert Gray when he denied my "right" to tape the meeting of December 19, 1991.

It is indisputable that we have a "Double Standard": one policy by the Park District disallowing the citizenry the right to tape record an "open public meeting"; and another policy allowing the park district the right to tape record citizenry comments. Equitable application of any law demands consistency, unless, you believe the law does not apply to you!

Perhaps the reason the Park District denied my right to tape record the comments by board members and the Director, was that they might have made derogatory remarks about the Federal and State Environmental Protection Agencies concerning Saw-Wee-Kee Park, as well as similar remarks about the homeowners living adjacent to the Park. A quote from Mr. Gray: "the agencies don't know the law...The Park District is getting jerked around...The agencies change their mind every day as to what they want." Another interesting statement by the Park District Director was the naming of some of the companies that dumped waste material at Saw-Wee-Kee Park. Could these and other reasons

possibly be why the Park District Director refused me my legal right to tape record the December 19, 1991 meeting? Were these comments entered into the minutes?

With regard to the Park Board meeting on Thursday, June 25, 1992, it appears that the Park District Director is trying to sideline the real issue at hand (Saw-Wee-Kee Park hazards as described by the ATSDR representative) with the "tape seized" issue. Should not the editor of the Ledger-Sentinel write on my behalf asking that the Oswegoland Park District Board send me a letter of apology for the actions of their employee (Mr. Bert Gray) in denying my right to tape an opening meeting?

ROGER SCHIRADELLO

Our readers' opinions

Ledger-Sentinel

Forum

Thursday, July 9, 1992